2 INTERROGATING HITLER'S SPIES

At three o'clock in the morning on 6 September 1940, one of MI5's worst fears came true. That was the moment a German plane flying over Northamptonshire opened its doors and let out Gösta Caroli. He had never jumped out of a plane before but here he now was, trying to land near Birmingham. For a few seconds it all seemed to be going to plan, until his backpack hit his head, knocking him unconscious for the rest of the descent. Considering what was in that bag – a wireless transmitter in a metal box, an automatic pistol, several rounds of ammunition, cans of corned beef, bottles of liquor, biscuits, chocolate, cigarettes, knives, clothes, a torch, a compass and an alarm clock – it was a wonder he landed alive. But he did, even though he was now in the village of Denton near Northampton, quite a distance from Birmingham. Not that he knew that. Dazed from the fall, he decided to lie in a ditch and wait for daylight to figure out his next steps. There he fell asleep until he was woken up by a Home Guard patrol. From the ditch he was driven to the local police station, then to Canon Row Police Station in Central London, and from there to MI5's Camp 020 in Richmond. The route was carefully planned, to avoid passing through bombed neighbourhoods. 'Like all these Germans that come over and say they have obliterated London, you had a delightful drive through London', Robin Stephens, the commandant, told him upon arrival. 'You were surprised to see that [Luftwaffe pilots] have got all those Iron Crosses for nothing. Honourable people, aren't they?'[1]

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Despite Stephens wanting to appear unperturbed, Caroli's arrival was proof that what MI5 had dreaded and feared was now a reality: spies were falling from the sky. Thousands of Britons shared that fear for months. On 15 May, for instance, the Cabinet had been told of multiple calls received by the police the previous night from panicked Londoners who reported seeing parachutists descending into the capital. What they had witnessed were, in fact, barrage balloons being struck during a thunderstorm, but it demonstrated the public's anxiety at the prospect.[2] Yet no parachutist had actually been captured prior to Caroli, while the first German agents had been arrested just a few days earlier, arriving on a boat. And now, on 6 September, it finally happened. Did Caroli's arrival signal an intensification of German espionage efforts? How many more would be dropped?

Only ten or so men were dropped in the end, although more arrived through less dramatic means. Most of them were nationals of allied and neutral countries, and were aware that they would be facing the death penalty if caught. What motivated them to side with Nazi Germany in this way? Millions of Europeans under occupation grappled daily with the dilemma of how to deal with the Germans, and many had to cooperate.[3] Yet those detained in Camp 020 were a different group. They were not civil servants or police officers whose dilemma was whether to keep reporting to work, now that 'work' was under German control. They were people who crossed into another country to do work that directly undermined the Allied war effort.

Devotion to Nazism may seem the obvious motivation, but it rarely was. In fact, the Abwehr deliberately avoided sending people who were 'known' Nazis or had formal Nazi affiliations, as they ran the risk of being identified very quickly. Instead of ideology, the reasons people agreed to spy for Germany more commonly included blackmail, opportunism and desperation to escape occupied Europe. Based on all we know about Nazi Germany, this is not at all surprising. A mission carried a high probability of failure so of course it had to be undertaken by those considered 'undesirable' or 'disposable'. At the same time, these people were not chosen solely for factors such as their ethnicity or religion; the regime also had to have something over them, a lever to force them not only to accept a mission but to remain loyal during it. Often this was a previous crime which would be forgiven if the individual was to carry out a mission, a family member in occupied territory who would suffer the consequences if anything went wrong

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or simply the fear of falling back into German hands as a traitor. After all, for a long time it did seem that Nazi Germany was winning the war and that people would be answerable to them for their choices.

As a result, many of the spies seemed to be, as Stephens once called them, 'victims of circumstance'. One example was a man who arrived on a small boat a few weeks after Caroli. His name was Otto Joost, a twenty-nine-year-old German with a long history of left-wing activism – from punching a member of the Sturmabteilung (SA) to being dismissed from the German police due to his Marxist views, and even fighting with the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War. Being an 'extremely persona non grata to the Nazis' as a result, he was hiding in Belgium at the start of the war. But there he managed to strike a deal with the Gestapo: if he were to undertake a spy mission, he could then return to Germany without facing imprisonment. And thus, he was sent to England to infiltrate one of the Allied missions.[4] Many of those who ended up in Camp 020 had similar stories.

Some do fit more with the conventional idea of a Nazi spy. An example was Karl Heinrich Meier, captured two days before Caroli and sentenced to death in November 1940. Like Caroli, Meier was raised by a German father, although in the Netherlands rather than Sweden. In the final letter to his family, he wrote that 'it is better for me to die for my ideals … I intended in one way and another to do my duty as a soldier for our greater Fatherland … the money which I could have earned [as a spy] was entirely a secondary consideration'.[5] Accompanying Meier when he arrived in England was fellow Dutchman Sjoerd Pons, a member of the Dutch Nazi Party who in detention expressed antisemitic views and an admiration for 'German efficiency'.

Yet as MI5 realised early on, not adhering to National Socialism did not mean that a detainee would act as if they were pro-Allied when captured, and vice versa: people made decisions about what to do and say based on their circumstances rather than their political beliefs. Personal interest, shame, fear and mistrust in the authorities all played a role in their calculations. And so whereas both Pons and Meier proved easy to break, Joost did not. Despite what Meier was telling his family, in Camp 020 not only did he show 'the most readiness to give information' out of the men he was captured with, he also swore that he was pro-US.[6] He had spent years in America, and having been caught up in the Netherlands at the outbreak of the war he had calculated that

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his best bet was to play the 'good German', which he did by joining the Nazi Party and the SA. But his plan all along, he claimed, was to get to the US. When standing in front of the jury, Pons cried that he was coerced into spying after the Gestapo discovered he was smuggling money, not because he volunteered; his story was convincing enough for the jury to find him not guilty. Whatever their real beliefs, neither Pons nor Meier were prepared to be hanged for them.

As for the clearly anti-Nazi Joost, not only did he not give himself up once he reached Scotland, he and his two companions proceeded with their plan, which was to fool the authorities into believing they were refugees. This would have allowed them to move around the country legally, find accommodation, obtain ration cards and potentially carry out their missions. Had MI5 not been given the name of one of them by another captured spy – Vera Schalburg – only days previously, their made-up story would have been believed, MI5 admitted, partly due to their anti-Nazi pasts. Even in Camp 020 Joost said only as much that helped to explain why he undertook the mission, this way avoiding the death penalty, but was unwilling to share any more information with British intelligence. He only told his full story in 1946, in an attempt to be finally released from British captivity. Part of what he had hidden from Camp 020 was an earlier espionage mission he undertook for Nazi Germany in France.

There were also those who had no views on Nazism. A Portuguese national, captured in Cape Town at the end of 1942, is an example. He claimed that he accepted a mission purely for the money and never intended to carry it out. In terms of a political identity, he saw himself as 'an ardent Portuguese national' but that was it – he was 'uninterested in the Germans, he fears Communism, and openly admits that he is neither pro- nor anti-British'.[7] These cases explain why ideological labels mattered little when it came to Camp 020. Detainees would be asked about their politics as part of a standard form that had to be filled for each of them, but what would be noted was whatever that individual declared, with no further evaluation as to its veracity; many forms simply said 'none' next to political views.

All this means that whatever image comes to mind when one thinks of Nazi spies, those sent as spies included anti-fascists, people indifferent to politics, common criminals, some Jewish people trying to escape occupied Europe and only a minority of ideologically motivated individuals. Indeed, if those detained as German agents in Britain – the

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prisoners of Camp 020 – had one thing in common, it was not Nazism but the fact that the Nazi regime did not care about them. Many of these people gave intelligence during their interrogations, but evaluating it would require following that intelligence into the wider world of espionage and far from interrogation. In contrast, the choices that led them to Camp 020, and the choices they made once caught, tell us much about what kind of people the Abwehr were recruiting and the nature of the espionage threat Britain ultimately faced.

2.1 VICTIMS OF CIRCUMSTANCE

When Stephens called some prisoners 'victims of circumstance', he was not referring to a formal category. Yet the term has much value, as many of those who ended up in Camp 020 were neither trained spies nor did they want to do that job. Instead, they saw a mission as the least worse of two options. For instance, one of the men who arrived with Meier and Pons in September 1940 was Charles Albert van den Kieboom, a Dutch-Japanese hotel clerk. He was friends with Pons and together they had been involved in money-smuggling activities in the occupied Netherlands. When the Germans found out, their choice – as Kieboom understood it – was 'punishment by the Germans or acceptance of the [spy] job'. How exactly the Gestapo approached him is unclear but his interrogator in Camp 020 thought Kieboom had been frightened 'by the Germans to such an extent that he is still afraid to tell us anything because of what the Germans will do to him after they have conquered England'.[8] He was sentenced to death and executed in December 1940.

Not all victims of circumstance were involved in crime. Among them were also those who were simply desperate to escape Nazi Europe. That was the case for three Cuban nationals arrested on board a civilian vessel called the *Josephine* in November 1940. They had travelled to Europe in the late 1930s to fight with the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War. After the end of that war, they were kept in internment camps on the French side of the Franco-Spanish border until the Second World War broke out. Then they were released and left to make their own way to Paris, on foot. Once there, they were given three options: either work for the Germans in occupied France or be sent to Vichy France or Franco's Spain. Wanting to return to Cuba instead, they kept trying to find alternatives. Their chance came in the form of another veteran of

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the Spanish Civil War who introduced them to a German officer, who proposed they joined a sabotage mission to England. This they accepted as their only way out of France, and not because they had any desire or intention to serve the Germans.[9] The proof of this was that they threw overboard most of the sabotage equipment they were given soon after they sailed on *Josephine* from Audierne. In Camp 020, they spoke freely and still saw themselves as anti-fascists.

The crew of the *Josephine*, who too were in the pay of the Germans, can also be seen as victims of circumstance, specifically the circumstances created by the occupation of their homelands. Two of them – Josef Martinez and Theophile Jezequel – were French. Right before working on *Josephine*, Martinez, who said that he supported the Republicans in Spain and Britain in the present war, had been a crew member on a French ship carrying Allied refugees to Cherbourg and Brest.[10] With the fall of France, all French ships were destroyed and so he was left unemployed and desperate for money. Similarly, Jezequel, described as 'an extremely simple type' in Camp 020, was in the French Navy at the outbreak of the war and lost his finger when his ship was attacked. Having been demobilised and sent to France, he too could not find any French ships to work on. Both accepted whatever job they were offered without asking questions, simply because they had no other choice. In Camp 020, they claimed – and were believed – not to have known that *Josephine* was on a spy mission nor that it was bound for England. A third crew member – Arie van Dam, a Dutch sailor and member of the Dutch Social Democratic Workers' Party – also claimed ignorance. These people, who were seen as a 'fairly innocent tool of the Germans', may well have suspected that they were part of a covert affair, but chose not to ask questions and just take the money.[11]

Unlike them, the captain of the *Josephine*, Dutchman Cornelius Evertsen, knew that he was taking three agents to England. This is despite the fact that he considered himself an anti-Nazi and was a member of the Dutch Anti-Revolutionary Party, which had now joined the Dutch government in exile and the resistance.[12] But he accepted the mission, due to the fact that the Germans had discovered his involvement in money-smuggling activities and threatened that he would be shot if he refused. Even so, when a British naval patrol was approaching *Josephine*, Evertsen instructed everyone on board to tell a fake story in order to evade arrest and not frustrate the mission. Even in Camp 020 it took some pressure for him to ditch the story and admit what he

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knew, confirming again that one's anti-Nazi politics did not mean that they would come clean once caught.[13] That some of his clueless crew, such as van Dam, stuck to the fake story longer than Evertsen did similarly shows that fear had much to do with how individuals behaved under interrogation.

Norwegians too were victims of the circumstances created by occupation. There was Gunnar Edvardsen, a Norwegian who arrived in October 1940 on the same boat as Joost. As a journalist, Edvardsen claimed to have penned anti-Nazi and anti-Quisling articles, and was thus unable to find work once Norway was occupied. It was therefore financial necessity that led him to agree to work for the regime he had opposed and to go to Scotland. Armed with a set of pliers, he was to commit acts of sabotage such as cutting telephone wires, hoping that the German Army would come and save him within a month.[14] The third man with Edvardsen and Joost was Legwald Lund, a fifty-five-year-old shipmaster. He had no clear politics, but he had got into a drunken altercation with a German police officer who Lund believed had had an affair with his fiancé. Under the threat that he would be sent to Germany 'to be dealt with', he agreed to go to Scotland, not knowing exactly why. He was told to join a specific establishment for seamen in Glasgow and await further instructions about what to do there.[15] Like Joost, neither Edvardsen nor Lund gave themselves up upon arrival, nor did they immediately confess upon arrest.

Similarly to Lund, many more did not have any discernible politics. For instance, Oscar Liehr was a young man from Argentina who had lived in Germany since the mid-1930s, sent there by his German father in order to learn a trade. Being underage on arrival, he was automatically enrolled into the Hitler Youth but stopped attending in 1940.[16] He was also twice called up into the German armed forces but, not wanting to serve, decided to return to Argentina with the help of his embassy. En route to Buenos Aires, he missed his ship and was stranded in Lisbon without money for a new ticket, leading him to pawn much of what he owned, including his hat, a pen, a watch and his overcoat. A seemingly chance encounter with a man who turned out to be a German spy presented him with a deal: payment for his fare back home, provided he would send reports on Allied ships. Liehr was arrested with three others in Trinidad and was taken to Camp 020, where he spent his twenty-first birthday and two other birthdays as well. He was sent to Argentina in October 1945.[17]

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Another case where no clear political allegiance is evident is that of Nikolai Hansen, the Norwegian parachuted in 1943 with two wireless transmitters and secret ink concealed in his teeth. A coal miner before the war, he took up various jobs for the Germans in the first two years of Norway's occupation. But he also illegally kept a radio so that he could listen to the BBC. When his father, a communist, threatened to denounce him for this, a friend advised him to join the Norwegian Nazi Party in order to pre-empt suspicion. While Hansen refused, fearing that this would render him liable for military service, he forced his wife to join the Nazi Party instead. This still did not help him when he was caught stealing from the German naval store he worked in. On his first day at the job, he stole fifteen packs of cigarettes, fourteen of which he gave to his friends; later that day, he pilfered fifty sausages and gave them to a group of Russian prisoners who had been doing forced labour alongside him. For this he was sent to the Fuhlsbüttel concentration camp in Germany, where he lost twenty-three kilos in three months. But he got an early release in mid-1943, after the occupation authorities back in Norway discovered the radio he had illegally kept and an undeclared revolver. When he was taken back home, he was told that he could avoid being executed only by accepting an espionage mission, which he did. Soon after, he was parachuted into Scotland. In Camp 020, Stephens found Hansen to be 'a dull, unobservant, peasant type … quite devoid of patriotism … And even as regards his personal inclinations, there is no evidence of any real desire to help the Allies'.[18] It was thought that, as in the past, Hansen would always do what was in his own interests at a particular moment. Hard as it may be to imagine that in the midst of the Second World War people had no political sentiment, for many their decisions were based on survival instincts rather than on their worldviews.

That somebody like Hansen was taken out of a concentration camp and dropped over the Highlands is indicative of the fact that as well as being victims of circumstance, these people were not professionals either – they were sailors, fishermen, manual labourers and students. Most had no previous dealings with the world of espionage and had received only some basic training prior to their mission; neither Hansen nor Caroli had jumped out of a plane before. Even the few who had experience of working for German intelligence could be seen as victims of circumstance. An obvious example was Vera Schalburg, who had been in the world of espionage for years. Yet even she seemed

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to have been forced into it from a young age by her first husband, a Soviet spy, and kept being used in a similar way by her second husband, a German spymaster. Not a victim of wartime circumstance in the way others were, Schalburg was still a victim of her own circumstances, shaped by the wider conditions of interwar Europe.

As for the two men she arrived with – Karl Theo Drueke and Werner Waelti – for Drueke there was suspicion that, although he was a trained Abwehr agent, there was also a rumour that he was part-Jewish and, for reasons that were neither clarified nor confirmed, was forced into that mission with Schalburg. In his turn, Waelti certainly tried to portray himself as a victim of circumstance, claiming to have been recruited after being caught smuggling Jews. He was threatened with military service, then with imprisonment in Germany, and then he was given the option of avoiding all punishment by carrying out a single mission. In his own words, 'They said all they wanted was to bring a [suitcase] over to England and hand it over to somebody and afterwards I would be acquitted … I agreed to the proposals to get away, because I thought it would be better to take a chance in England than to do ten years in Germany'. For MI5's Klop Ustinov, who spent hours talking to Schalburg in 1942, neither she nor Drueke nor Waelti nor anyone who had arrived in Britain up to that point was a proper, trained agent, even if they had some experience with the Abwehr. Sending trained spies to Britain was simply not the strategy the Abwehr was going to be using in this war, thought Ustinov:

> It has been done before – in Belgium, in Holland and in France – and it has worked! The Germans, therefore, had some excuse in thinking that it would work again … [that] spies and agents were not individually dispatched as highly trained experts, who have to hold their own in enemy country for months and perhaps years, but thrown into battle in numbers, with the hope that 'some will get through' … and live to see their own folk in 'two weeks' time … just a cargo of 'meat' as [Schalburg] put it … And what sort of people were the spies … A sullen, dispirited group, destined for failure and conscious of it. Small fry. People under fear and obligation. People whom one treats like 'dirt'.[19]

Whether one chooses to call them 'victims of circumstance' or 'people under fear and obligation', going on a mission was for many the

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best of two bad alternatives. There may be hundreds of people who faced similar dilemmas but who took a risk and refused to take up a mission. We will never know their stories, simply because they were never involved and hence they were never interrogated. Some occasionally were also pro-Nazi, like Pons, whom the Gestapo threatened with imprisonment unless he went on a mission. But he was also a member of the Dutch Nazi Party and sounded like it.[20] Yet for those who did accept, one thing is certain: fear, rather than ideology, determined who would be selected for a mission, and fear would again ensure that many would remain loyal, until they were caught. Then, another Evertsen or Edvardsen would be picked up from somewhere in occupied Europe, threatened and dispatched to replace them.

2.2 OPPORTUNISTS

In a time of war, anyone can claim to be a victim of circumstance. This is especially so for civilians under occupation who were making decisions based on their own understanding of events and their own best judgement. Some did have an alternative to spying and yet chose to do the former. They too were present in Camp 020, and their existence makes it important not to stretch the 'victims of circumstance' label too far. Take for example Helmik Wallem, the young Norwegian sent to infiltrate the British armed forces as a radio operator, which was his peacetime profession. He was not coerced into doing this; he was approached because of his skills and given time to decide, and he even discussed his options with his sister and brother-in-law who told him not to do it.[21] He initially refused the offer, and nothing happened to him. But he kept thinking about it, tempted by the money – he would be given a lump sum on acceptance, and then his family would be given a monthly allowance while he was away – and so he went back and accepted, even though in Camp 020 he insisted that he 'never had Nazi sympathies and especially since the occupation of Norway'.[22]

People like Wallem who had an alternative and still accepted a mission can be described more as opportunists: they saw spying as an opportunity to profit instead of a chance to survive. Many nationals from neutral countries who were detained in Camp 020 fell into this category. One of them was Joaquin Baticon, mentioned in Chapter 1, who fully cooperated with MI5 by giving important intelligence.[23] In terms of his politics, Camp 020 found him to be neither pro- nor

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anti-Nazi. His political fluidity went back to the 1930s, when he was initially with the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War but then joined the Falangists when they won the area he was in. Thanks to the use of concealed microphones, Camp 020 concluded that he truly had no particular 'preference for Axis doctrines as opposed to any other political philosophy, and he has in fact admitted to another prisoner at Camp 020 that he would have worked for the Allies had they recruited him and offered him sufficient remuneration'.[24]

Money was also the motive for Jose Lourenco Moreira and Viana dos Santos, two Portuguese agents connected to Umberto Campini, the Italian Consul at Lourenco Marques. When SIS intercepted their names in enemy communications, they were serving on the *SS Colonial*, a Portuguese ship; when it docked at Freetown on a voyage between Mozambique and Lisbon in August 1943, they were swiftly arrested. Others on the ship also had links to Axis espionage, to the point that the arresting officers reported that the *SS Colonial* 'must be more heavily loaded with sin than any other ship sailing the sea'.[25] These included the ship's barber, the manicurist and a page, who were nevertheless considered too unimportant to be arrested. Even Moreira and dos Santos were small fry, Camp 020 went on to discover, and it seemed that their sole motivation was financial; especially for dos Santos, the verdict was that 'his idol is money'. He had been working since the age of twelve to support his mother and sister, and working for the Germans was just another opportunity to make money.[26] That dos Santos had a preoccupation with money is also clear from a letter he wrote to his family from Camp 020 which was never delivered, since detainees were not allowed to correspond. Convinced that he would die there (he did not), he wrote to them with instructions to collect his insurance money and to sell the 300 litres of olive oil he had on him when arrested.[27] That somebody whose only loyalty was to money was recruited was, for Stephens, further proof of the Abwehr's 'customary flair for the inappropriate'.[28]

Even people with clear anti-Nazi views betrayed the Allies when the opportunity arose. This was the story of Fernando Martinez Casabayo, a Spaniard who was being trained in England as an agent with SOE. This was an exceptional case because Casabayo was not recruited by the Germans; instead, he was in a position to sell intelligence against the Allies and did it. Despite having fought with the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War, and despite being with the

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Allies in this war, he was allegedly in desperate need of money for his wife and children, one of whom was ill. However, the allowance he was receiving from SOE was too little for his needs. In 1942 he came up with an elaborate plan to desert, change his identity and take up demolition work in London, the income from which would be higher than his SOE salary. In the process of assuming a fake identity, he visited the Francoist Embassy in London, and it was there that he sold information about SOE tactics and equipment intended for Spain. The deal was relayed to MI5 through a Double-Cross agent in the embassy known as Peppermint and Casabayo was taken to Camp 020.[29] Not only did he confess, MI5 had also 'established beyond question' that the information he sold had reached both the Spanish and the Germans.[30] None of this made Casabayo see himself as anything but an anti-fascist:

> I personally have been fighting, since 1936, against international Fascism; I know quite well that this alone means nothing, when the trust which could be placed in me has completely disappeared … I know I deserve whatever punishment is inflicted upon me, but I want to think that, whatever happens, my last moments of life will be spent in thinking of my family and in crying out, 'Let Fascism die!!'.[31]

It was not just nationals of neutral countries who took part in espionage for money. Allied nationals did too. Take the case of Homer Serafimides, the Greek sailor taken to Camp 020 to testify against Campini and for the confession to be shown to António Salazar. The way he was captured was through an SIS agent provocateur, who suggested to Serafimides that they surrender an Allied ship to the Axis, for money; he accepted and ended up in Camp 020. But there was more to his behaviour than money. Instead, by the point SIS approached Serafimides in Lourenco Marques in 1943, he was already determined to take revenge on 'the Allies' for how he had been personally treated on a British ship. It started when Serafimides decided, three years into the war, that Britain was betraying the democratic principles it was fighting for and so wanted to move to Nazi-occupied Greece. When the owner of his ship refused to release him, Serafimides decided to take revenge by actively working for the Axis, which is how he met Campini.[32] There may be more complex psychological explanations for the behaviour of this specific individual, but on the surface, this

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was a man who was prepared to switch sides because he did not get his way. In the process, he also sought to make some money.

Opportunism was therefore not solely about financial gain. In a few cases, it was not about that at all: it was about self-interest more broadly. A man who saw espionage as an opportunity to go on adventures and then write about them was Hans von Meiss-Teuffen, a Swiss born to Austrian parents. In October 1941, ISOS revealed that an agent fitting his description would arrive in West or Central Africa.[33] When Meiss-Teuffen emerged – in his own yacht – on the coast of Gambia in March 1942, he confessed that he was indeed recruited by the Germans but claimed that he only did it in order to double-cross and become an Allied agent.[34] Upon meeting him in Camp 020, Stephens called Meiss-Teuffen 'bombastic'. Part of the reason was that he carried with him press cuttings reporting on his own sailing adventures, which Stephens thought amounted 'to nothing more than the unrecorded service of many a seaman'.[35] A second interrogator thought that Meiss-Teuffen was chasing the 'glamour' of being a spy rather than motivated by politics or money.[36] The conclusion in the camp was that he was 'a supreme egoist', a snob, and 'his own best friend'. After meeting him, Swiss officials thought along similar lines, describing Meiss-Teuffen as 'an ass, wild and unsettled'.[37] The decision was taken to release him, as he had thrown his wireless transmitter overboard before arriving in Gambia and there was no reason to think he would try to send information back to the Germans. He was therefore set free on the condition that he would not be allowed to leave England during the war and that he could only accept jobs through the Ministry of Labour.

Reality did not stop Meiss-Teuffen from living his dream, and word reached MI5 in 1943 that he was telling people that he was a secret agent, often 'as an excuse to leave his job early'.[38] Even in an autobiography he started writing in Camp 020, eventually published in 1953, he maintained the claim that he was a British double agent who was parachuted into occupied France.[39] At the time of his alleged parachuting, he was in Camp 020, working as a car mechanic in a garage in London, and then working possibly with the Surrey Agricultural Committee. In between, he may have also been prosecuted for moving home without notifying the authorities, which was one of the conditions of his release. He also did not leave quietly in 1945. Not wanting to return to Switzerland in a passenger plane or ship, he asked to sail in his own yacht. Attempts were made by MI5

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to prevent that – out of fear that he would sail to somewhere in the British Empire and become a nuisance there – but he was adamant; one of the last communications about him was an exasperated comment by MI5 that 'they do not care where MEISS-TEUFFEN goes or by what means', so long as he leaves.[40] As suspected, Switzerland was not his destination. 'Sailing alone in a 43-year-old 33ft. yawl', wrote an article in *The Times* six months later, 'a young Swiss named Hans von Meiss-Teuffen has arrived in Gibraltar from Kingston-on-Thames … From Gibraltar he intends to cross the Atlantic by way of the Canaries, and Madeira, emulating the feats of solitary navigators like Captain Slocum and Alain Gerbault'.[41]

Other than the self-centred, opportunists also included common criminals who adapted from peacetime to wartime crime – 'underworld riff-raff', as Stephens called them. Not only was the opaqueness of espionage similar to the life they were used to, some Abwehr stations actively recruited from prisoner populations – such as Eddie Chapman, whose long criminal history in Britain assured the Germans that he would do his best not to get caught. Fernando Lipkau-Balleta was a similar case; born in Mexico to a Russian-Polish father and an Italian-Swiss mother, he had lived in Europe most of his life, including in Spain. It was there, in 1937, that he 'applied himself with zest to Black Market activities', reselling foodstuffs and exchanging Spanish currency, contrary to Spanish law. He continued these activities during the Second World War until he was imprisoned and then expelled from Spain in April 1943. 'Then, almost inevitably, the German Secret Service appeared on the scene', and Lipkau-Baletta was recruited. In Camp 020 he still described his politics as democratic, liberal and anti-fascist; Stephens saw him as a 'a treacherous blackguard' who 'indulged in espionage for a foreign power, to whom he owed no loyalty, for money'.[42]

There was also Claude Poisson, a Frenchman in his late twenties who described himself as a 'commercial artist' but who his interrogator described as 'a wastrel and ingrate of the first order'.[43] This was because he did not have a set profession, he was considered a 'womaniser', he had incurred debts which his father had to pay and he had then stolen from his father. All this before he was recruited by the Abwehr in occupied France with a mission to spy on his compatriots in Vichy. He was then given a further mission to England, but when he was caught he claimed that he was not planning on carrying it out. It would

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be 'a source of great satisfaction if, when hostilities are over, he could be handed over to the lawful French Government to stand his trial for treason', wrote his interrogator in November 1943.[44] His wish came true in 1948, when a French court sentenced Poisson to one year's imprisonment for breach of trust and to a further six months for theft.

Opportunists were also those who simply switched sides when it suited them. That was the case of Pieter Schipper, who arrived in England in 1942 as a refugee and readily confessed upon interrogation that he had been providing intelligence to the Germans since the fall of the Netherlands. A fisherman, he agreed to have his trawlers fitted with wireless transmitters and received training in how to send reports on the weather and various other naval observations. Having done this for over a year – without hesitation and without coercion, he admitted – the Germans grew unhappy with his reports and this is why he escaped, leaving behind his wife and children. He simply switched sides when the previous arrangement stopped working in his favour rather than due to ideology, money or a belated sense of loyalty. A post-war court in Amsterdam sentenced him to over two years' imprisonment and deprived him of his rights as a citizen for ten years.[45]

A similar case is that of Joseph Janssens, a Belgian shoe manufacturer in his late thirties. By the time he arrived in England as a refugee in the summer of 1943, his activities with the Abwehr were known through ISOS. But in Camp 020, he was not forthcoming with a confession about his past, until he realised that his interrogators were smarter than him. What impressed him was how they managed to find a cover address he had tried to conceal. This was down to the ingenuity of his interrogator and Stephens's second-in-command, Captain Short. When inspecting Janssen's notebook, Short noticed that on one page there was an address without a name; on another page, there was a crossed-out name without an address. When the two were put together, they created a known cover address. When this was shown to him, Janssens confessed and blamed his earlier allegiance to Nazi propaganda. He 'admitted freely that at one time he believed that a German victory was the best possible solution for Belgium and that she would occupy a favourable position in the new order as outlined by the Nazis'. Once he left occupied territory and reached Madrid as a spy, he caught up with the real progress of the war and it was then that 'suspicion entered his mind that all was not well in German occupied Europe'. Without the prospect of a New World Order in which he

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would have a favourable position, he decided to switch sides. Although Stephens described Janssens as 'a pernicious turncoat', the fact that he was actually disillusioned was proven through other intercepted messages, in which the Germans described Janssens as 'a disaffected agent', and through a letter they sent him, threatening reprisals against his family. It is at that point that he left for Britain, where he had escaped as a child refugee in the First World War. The reality is, though, that despite his disillusionment with the likelihood of a Nazi World Order, he did not give himself up and was reluctant to give intelligence until he was shown evidence of his past activities. 'Like so many others of his type', wrote Stephens, 'he anticipated securing work in the Congo or in England and vainly imagined that his [Abwehr] training etc. would never come to light'. He was detained until February 1945 when Belgium was fully liberated.

Switching sides when things became heated was also the story of Jean Huysmans, who then became a kind of stool pigeon in Camp 020. A Belgian living in the Netherlands, Huysmans had run into problems with the Germans several times, including twice in 1941 for apparently hiding arms and foreign currency. Although he was not imprisoned, these allegations made him known to the Abwehr for being university-educated and speaking five languages. He was recruited and tasked with travelling to Britain, though he had to make his own way there. One suggestion was to do this by penetrating Jewish escape routes into Belgium and then Spain. Following this plan, Huysmans became involved in the business of actually smuggling Jews – something that went 'well, and profitably' for him, it was said at the time. Jewish lives may have been saved because of Huysmans's actions, but he was simultaneously trying to keep the Abwehr happy, and so he betrayed at least one escape route from Belgium into Vichy France.[46] This was therefore a case of someone who was working both for and against the Nazis. His partner in the smuggling 'business' was a Belgian Jew who had nothing to do with the Abwehr; he was likely a member of the resistance. When he was eventually arrested by the Gestapo, they found Huysmans's information on him and started looking for him. It was then that Huysmans decided it was really time for him and his wife to get to Britain.[47] They made their way to Portugal where they applied for a visa to the UK, but at that point, intelligence from an MI5 officer in Lisbon revealed him as an agent. Despite betraying an Allied escape route, his subsequent stool pigeon duties – it is unknown whether he

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did more work for MI5 or SIS – were considered so valuable that when he was returned to Belgium in 1945, there was a strong attempt by MI5 to prevent him (and three other Belgians) from being prosecuted for their earlier activities. The question of whether Huysmans would be prosecuted put 'the good faith of the Security Service and indeed the credit of this country for fair dealing … very much at stake', wrote Buster Milmo. He wanted the matter taken up 'at as high level as is necessary with the Belgian Authorities to see what can be done' to avoid prosecuting them.[48] Yet Belgium wanted to press ahead with Huysmans's trial, and he was still in prison in 1948.

Ultimately, opportunists were people who put self-interest first. In doing so, they attached their personal interest to that of the Nazi regime and so worked for its advancement, even when they did not agree with its politics. Like victims of circumstance, they too were very different kinds of people – from Casabayo who needed the money for his sick child, to Lipkau-Baletta who was a fraudster, to Huysmans who was making a living both by helping Jews escape and working for the Abwehr. That the primary factor in their calculations seems to have been profit does not mean that other considerations did not come into play. But regardless of why exactly they put self-interest first, many opportunists failed to see a link between their actions and the war. An anti-fascist like Casabayo could give information to the enemy but still see himself as an anti-fascist. A man like Lipkau-Baletta could describe himself as a democrat, all the while working for the Nazis to win the war. Here again, therefore, the question was which side served an individual's immediate interests best, rather than which side reflected their worldviews.

2.3 NAZIS

By accepting a mission, both victims of circumstance and opportunists had practically sided with Germany. Yet this happened in spite of Nazi ideology, rather than because of it. In Camp 020, however, were also those who sided with Nazi Germany more enthusiastically: because they wanted it to win the war. For some, their allegiance was primarily down to family links and patriotism. It started with Caroli, who wanted Germany to win and saw espionage as his chance to help achieve that. He did not attempt to hide his allegiance during his first interrogation with Stephens, which was recorded:

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STEPHENS: Who is your master now?
CAROLI: I don't understand what you mean.
S: Are you still working for the Germans or do you prefer to be shot?
C: Well I am not working any more, but I have to keep my oath.
S: You think it is necessary to keep your oath?
C: Yes …
S: Just like the other rats. They all say the same thing first and then they break down afterwards.
C: No.
S: What was the oath they told you to keep?
C: I have been striving to obey.
S: Whom?
C: The German Army, the Fuehrer and Deutschland.
S: [What] is this sudden love for the Fuehrer? That comic opera man? What's that for – all for four hundred Marks?
C: No.
S: [What] is it for then?
C: I liked Germany so much. I have German blood.
S: … [After asking him about his sisters and father in Sweden] You would like them … to have some information about you?
C: No, no thanks.
S: … Why do you say you don't want them to know? You say you are an honourable man. We can let them know you have been shot as a dirty rat and a spy. You don't mind that, do you? … You are just an ordinary civilian brought in to do dirty work and thrown out of an aeroplane. Just consider this very carefully. We have 99% of the whole thing for understanding. The little more necessary to understand this we shall discover in a few hours or days. If you tell the rest of it now, we shall be saved the trouble. Is it worth your flinging your life away, so that we shall have a few extra hours' work. [*sic*]
C: Yes.
S: … The fact is you're afraid we will shoot you in any case. If you were told you wouldn't die, would you tell us this message?
C: I told you I don't mind to die.[49]

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In that first offensive by Stephens, in which Caroli stood by his beliefs, there was an offer: he could confess that one per cent that was allegedly unknown – what they wanted him to confess was the message he was supposed to send back to the Abwehr if he was to land successfully – and his life would be spared. He was left alone for ten minutes to weigh his options. It was then that it really hit him that execution was the next step, and one he was not prepared to take. As soon as Stephens re-entered the room, the offer was reiterated and Caroli immediately agreed. He went on to give intelligence against Germany and then agreed to work as a double agent. From there things moved quickly – too quickly, it was later realised – in that Caroli was given the codename 'Summer' and was dispatched to an MI5 safe house in Cambridge from which he was to be sending misinformation to the Germans, who still thought he was one of their own.

But while Caroli did switch sides to save his life, his loyalty remained with Germany. Soon after he reached Cambridge, it emerged that he had lied about his Abwehr service to Stephens. He told him he had been freshly recruited in 1940, when in fact he had been spying on Britain for longer, making him a more dangerous spy than initially thought. Following that revelation, he was returned to Camp 020. There, he tried to cut his wrists. Yet even this did not change the plan to use him as a double agent, and so despite concerns about his reliability, Caroli was returned to Cambridge. And then, within days, he tried to escape. He immobilised his guard and took off on a motorcycle, holding his suitcase in one hand and, somehow, a canoe in the other. Even MI5's Dick White took to the streets to search for him that January afternoon. Repeatedly falling off the motorcycle and unable to leave Cambridge, Caroli eventually accepted that canoeing back to Europe was a tall order. He gave up and drove to a police station.[50] He was returned to Camp 020 a third time, now only to leave it in August 1945 when he was deported to Sweden.

Others refused to even pretend that they would help the British. At the time of Caroli's arrest came the arrest of Peter Krag, a German-Dane who was the engineer of the *Josephine*, carrying the three Cubans to England in late 1940. When Denmark, his country, was overrun earlier that year, Krag rushed to volunteer for the German Navy. He was not accepted, and so he settled for civilian employment for the occupiers instead. When the crew of the *Josephine* was taken to Camp 020, it was not clear whether Krag even knew that the boats he had

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been working on belonged to the Abwehr, let alone whether he was a spy. But regardless, Krag behaved as if he was indeed on a mission: he 'remained loyal to Germany' under interrogation, he 'maintained a truculent attitude and obstructed the investigation of his case wherever possible'.[51] This was therefore a man who was likely not a spy but behaved as if he was under an oath of allegiance.

Outnumbering people such as Krag and Caroli, whose loyalty was more down to their family links to Germany than directly to Nazism, were those whose interests were aligned with those of the Nazi regime. One of them was Gabriel Billebault du Chaffault, a French aristocrat who was arrested in Gibraltar in the summer of 1943, on board a Spanish ship to Uruguay. By that point, and thanks to ISOS, British intelligence had 'virtually a complete dossier of his espionage career, training and assignments', which mainly concerned Uruguay, where he had family and business connections.[52] What was also known because of ISOS was that the Abwehr considered him and his family reliable: 'They judged him to be possessed of political acumen and reported that both he and his father were convinced collaborationists and ardent admirers of Hitler'.[53] Unlike many other prisoners, du Chaffault was therefore not in any way coerced into the job:

> Pressure, in fact, was not exerted by [the Germans] … there is no history of blackmail … There is no background of penury. There is no indication that the mission was accepted in the interest of a wife, of a fiancée, or of a family held hostage in occupied territory. There is no inducement such as conditional release from a vicious sentence of imprisonment. In short, there are no mitigating circumstances, whatever. The proposition of espionage suited du Chaffault's personal convenience, and he accepted it with little demur.[54]

Whether a prisoner was a Nazi seemed to have had little bearing on Camp 020's assessment of them. There was, for instance, Axel Cappelen, a Norwegian member of Vidkun Quisling's party, whom Stephens saw as a 'model prisoner'. After Cappelen gave himself up to the Norwegian Legation in Stockholm as a German agent in 1942, he was sent to Camp 020 at the end of the year. There he claimed that he always intended to double-cross to the Allies – a common claim. Yet in this case, Stephens was ready to accept it. He brushed away as formalities the facts that Cappelen was a Quisling and had already

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received payment from German intelligence. Instead, he recommended Cappelen for release and praised him as 'one of the most philosophical people' to have passed from the camp.[55] Why Stephens was so unusually generous here is unclear. It may have been because he was annoyed with the Norwegians, who made allegations against Cappelen but did not supply the evidence, delaying Camp 020 in the interim. But it may well have been down to the fact that Cappelen did not cry or attempt to bargain, behaviours that Stephens held against detainees. Take the example of Eugene van Ackere from France, who came to Britain in order to help the war effort. Due to a misunderstanding, he was briefly held in Camp 020 to confirm that he was not an agent. Not surprisingly for an innocent person, van Ackere kept crying and protesting his innocence; even in his cell at night he cried. But to Stephens, the camp had to 'bear witness to a mass of self-pity and unnecessary sentiment, which is positively nauseating'.[56] Contrast that with the Quisling Cappelen, who was a 'model prisoner'.

While Stephens's views of a prisoner usually aligned with those of other interrogators and more broadly with MI5, in the case of Cappelen Milmo called out Stephens's logic. He thought Stephens had 'made up his mind that CAPPELEN's bona fides can be accepted, and has rather shaped the facts to this end … He tends to overlook or minimise points which seem to me to tell against him'.[57] Representatives of Norwegian intelligence agreed with Milmo. But they went a step further and called out MI5's fairly lax attitude towards one's Nazi politics:

> [Cappelen] became a member of the Nazi Party. The Norwegian Authorities cannot accept his excuse. The only excuse for joining the [Nasjonal Samling] party is if it is really meant to work for the Norwegians and that this has been approved by our Norwegian organisations. The excuse that Cappelen gives … namely to avoid trouble, is not [acceptable by] the Norwegian population who are giving their lives to the fight for freedom. I know that the question of his membership … does not count in the British Authorities [*sic*] consideration of the case, but from the Norwegian point of view it is held very much against him.[58]

It did seem as if MI5 did not treat one's Nazi affiliations and ideas as seriously as other Europeans did, and this was not only the case with Cappelen. It also manifested itself in the case of Charles Boyd,

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a young man born and raised in South Africa to a Scottish father, through whom he possessed British nationality. Once more because of ISOS, it was revealed that Boyd was an Abwehr agent in September 1942.[59] He had been recruited soon after the war broke out, when he was on his way to South Africa from the US, where he was a student at the Carnegie Institute of Technology. His ship was intercepted by the Germans and taken to occupied France, where he was put in an internment camp due to his British nationality. It was there that he toyed with National Socialism and, apparently in reaction to being bullied by other British prisoners in the camp, offered to work for the Abwehr.[60] He was released from German internment, trained in secret writing methods and in signals, given a salary and tasked with finding a way to reach Spain. From there he would board a ship to South Africa and start his cloak-and-dagger career. Although MI5 thought he would have done precisely that had ISOS not given him away, there was a refusal to see Boyd as a Nazi, due to a combination of his British nationality and a desire to use him as a double agent. When John Masterman visited him in Camp 020, he found his Nazism not 'deeply rooted' and instead thought the problem was a 'weakness of character'.[61] Another officer who interrogated Boyd, and took an 'instant dislike' to him, also thought that he was not 'rabidly pro-Nazi', even though it would still 'require a great deal of careful underground propaganda to convince him' to side with the Allies.[62] When Milmo visited him, he too suggested to him that he should side with the Allies. To this Boyd responded, 'with unconcealed contempt, "you are not suggesting that I should become another Darlan".'[63] But he was still not seen as a 'real' Nazi. Not only that, everyone stopped short of admitting that Boyd was anti-British, and that that was partly what drove his preference for Nazi Germany. Eventually he wrote in a confession that he had 'become fervently Anglophobe', apparently in reaction to being bullied by Britons when he was interned in France:

> Unfortunately this left me extremely susceptible to the propaganda of the German papers and I became pro-German – making no secret of my feelings. I had also had the feeling for a long while that Democracy seemed to be played out and I sincerely hated many of the Democracies' weaknesses such as the lack of Statesmanship during 1918–1939 and the lack of adequate social reforms. This attitude is, I feel, common to

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> many people, however it leaves one little real defence when one is then exposed to German influence which explains that through it real social progress can be achieved. I felt that South Africa had been involved in a war in which she had no real interest and could only result in harm to South African economy and through this to white superiority in South Africa. Finally I had also felt decieved [*sic*] by the South African and American papers regarding German strength and I felt that too little emphasis had been placed on the better features of National Socialism. Consequently I had thus through brooding adopted a rather bitter feeling of hate for the people who had brought South Africa into the war. However, I began to realize the folly of this attitude but through obstinacy and the feeling that I had already only too well fixed my opinions in peoples' minds, refused to drop this attitude.[64]

His words were met with relief by Masterman and Milmo who were eager to use what they saw as a misguided – but redeemable – Nazi youth. The next problem was convincing Boyd to work for the Allies. To achieve this, Masterman used reverse psychology and presented the offer as an act of mercy: 'I told [Boyd] that … I did not myself think that he could be of very much use to us. None the less … I should always hope to give a man in such circumstances a second chance if it were reasonably possible.'[65] He agreed. The next hurdle was convincing the South African Government to accept Boyd. A message was sent, telling them that 'we have admirable opportunity of sending first class/agent', but the response was no. This must have come as a relief to Stephens, whose own opinion of Boyd deferred from the majority. 'My own opinion', he wrote in concluding the case, 'is that [Boyd] is a precious creature of half-baked ideals. He is openly anti-British and pro-German'. As for Boyd blaming his Nazism on being bullied in France, Stephens wrote that 'so narrow is his outlook that he takes the Internment Camp at St. Denis as a cross-section of the British race, and it is to be hoped, therefore, that he will be equally impressed when he regards [Camp 020] as a cross-section of the much vaunted Herrenvolk he so much admires … The man is a self-confessed traitor'.[66] Yet the extremely gentle treatment of Boyd continued now that somebody had to tell him that he could not be used, after all. Both Masterman and Milmo went personally to break the news and explain to him what had

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happened, all in order to ensure that he did not revert back to being bitter towards Britain. He was detained at Dartmoor prison, where he became friends with other former Camp 020 detainees and studied Russian together.[67] By 1944, it was reported that he was claiming to be a communist and 'no one now speaks to him'.[68]

Alignment with Nazism was expressed not only in words but also in actions, as in the case of a Norwegian man whom MI5 repeatedly called Eigil Robr, but whose surname was likely either Rober or Halvorsen. Having had a prison record before and during the war, it was believed that this is how he was identified and recruited by the Gestapo. The British Military Attache in Sweden, who came to know of Robr, raised the alarm in 1941: 'I am convinced myself that this man is as worthy of death penalty as QUISLING himself.'[69] Within a month, in circumstances that are unclear, Robr came to Britain (Stephens wrote in passing that the Military Attache appeared 'to have engineered the removal of ROBR from Stockholm to this country'[70]). Robr was initially taken to the Royal Patriotic School – as with any Allied national arriving in Britain – where he tried to present himself as a victim of the Nazis, claiming that earlier in 1941 he had been imprisoned and badly beaten up. A Norwegian doctor and a Norwegian dentist who were also detained in the School were asked to examine him and concluded that he could not have been treated in the way he was describing. Another Norwegian who was undergoing interrogation at that point was asked about Robr. He said that he knew him by sight and had seen him wearing Nazi emblems in public.[71] There was little question about whether his next stop should be Camp 020, even though on the face of it he appeared to be a traitor rather than a spy. In Camp 020, a series of interrogations and written confessions confirmed that he had been working as an agent provocateur for the Gestapo. In that capacity, he had betrayed at least nineteen Norwegians who were trying to escape; for each betrayal, he received the equivalent of £35. It was after twelve or so interrogations with him in March 1942 that Stephens remarked that he was one of his worst cases. 'Many evil personalities, both traitors and spies, have been admitted to this establishment [over the last two years], but I doubt whether there has been a character more vile' than Robr's. 'Viewed dispassionately and with the utmost charity', he continued, 'the betrayal under duress of one man or even two men may with bitterness be understood, but can there ever be extenuation for … nineteen betrayals over a period of 2 months?' He thought a decent

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person in Robr's position would have considered other options: 'Escape, imprisonment or even suicide are possible alternatives' to betraying 'strangers, acquaintances and school friends alike'.[72] Robr was kept in Camp 020 until he was deported to Norway in June 1945.

2.4 CHOICELESS CHOICES

Among the various types detained in Camp 020 as agents of the Germans – the blackmailed, the criminals, the opportunists, the Nazis – was one further group: Jewish detainees. These too had agreed to work for German intelligence. For them, however, a mission was not about hedging bets, making a living or self-interest. Espionage was another 'choiceless choice': having to do whatever it took to avoid extermination, even if the alternative was still a bad choice.[73] An extreme example was that of Paul Fackenheim, a German Jew in his mid-forties, who was parachuted into Palestine and quickly surrendered to a British military barracks in October 1941; he was sent to Camp 020. What was unusual about Fackenheim was that he had been taken out of Dachau in order to be sent on that mission. He had served with Germany in the previous war during which he had earned the Iron Cross, and in 1940 he was recruited by the Abwehr for a mission to England, which ended up being aborted due to bad weather.[74] Of no use to the Abwehr at that point, he ended up in Dachau. When the Abwehr needed to throw someone out of a plane over Palestine, they thought of Fackenheim, apparently because he had relatives there. And so they arranged for his release after threatening him that 'his aged mother and his motherless son' would suffer reprisals if he were to refuse. From Dachau he was sent to Nazi-occupied Athens, where he received some rudimentary training, including in identifying British tanks, guns, aircraft and insignia. He was not given fake identification documents or the names of anyone to contact in Palestine, and the way he was advised to escape once he had completed his mission had little chance of success: he was told to ask any fisherman to take him to the island of Chios.[75] Two Armenian Jews, one of them a sick man in his fifties, were also dropped by the Abwehr near Aleppo at around that time.[76] Like Fackenheim, they received only rudimentary training and were not given false identification papers or names to contact in Syria.

Yet Camp 020 seemed blind to the 'choiceless choices' facing the Jews of Europe; if anything, the bar for accepting the stories of

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Jewish detainees was especially high. The case of Salomon Peereboom serves as an example. A Dutch man in his early fifties, at the outbreak of war he was the Manager of the Netherlands Branch of Paramount Films. He asked Paramount to issue a US visa for him and his wife so that they could escape; he also pleaded with them to issue a visa for a friend of his and his wife. Paramount helped all four of them and they escaped in 1941 – first to Cuba, from there to the US and then to Canada, where Peereboom joined the Dutch Forces and went to the UK to serve as an officer. Nine months on, Peereboom reported that the friend he had escaped with was a German agent. Attention turned to Peereboom as much as to his friend, who was indeed an agent. Was Peereboom also an agent? How long had he known about his friend? Why did he not report him earlier? These legitimate questions were combined with a determination not to believe Peereboom, whatever he said or did. Not only that, but his entire story was ridiculed by Stephens – from the fact that Peereboom managed to escape to how he behaved in interrogation:

> PEEREBOOM is an unlovable Dutch Jew. His character is as complex as it is sordid. His ways are not our ways, and because of it his whole case is difficult to understand. In exchange for an exit permit … PEEREBOOM was to cover a German Secret Service agent named SIPS. The reward, at the end of the war, was permission for PEEREBOOM, the Jew, to re-enter Holland with the right to represent the Paramount Film Cooperation in that country again. The bitter alternative was deportation from Holland with the prospect of slave labour. PEEREBOOM accepted the terms of the German Secret Service. But again it is characteristic of the man that there was no loyalist resentment. Instead, there is a fair history of smiling co-operation … [In Camp 020] first we had the proud but misjudged officer of the Dutch Army. Next we had the oppressed Jew. One day he would be arrogant, the next day he would cringe. Sometimes he remained aloof, at other times he dared to be familiar. Seven weeks of this nonsense was tolerated in an attempt to obtain his story … Again it is relevant to comment on the character of this nauseating personality. When I broke him in interrogation on 10.8.43 he knelt before me and cried all over the interrogation table. Yet within the hour he thanked

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> me for my assistance and offered a flabby hand, much in the same way as he would do at the conclusion of a mutually profitable deal … As a spy PEEREBOOM cannot be hanged by the British authorities. Even if the law admitted of the possibility I doubt whether it would be worth the trouble, nor would we gain by the repercussion.[77]

More measured in how he expressed his own opinion, Milmo also failed to understand what was at stake for someone like Peereboom:

> I am convinced that this man is a scoundrel and a liar … I will not go so far as to say that the man is necessarily implicated in espionage but I am left in no doubt whatsoever that he … was prepared to turn a blind eye to what was happening because it suited his own immediate purpose to do so.[78]

Unsurprisingly, the decision was taken to detain him indefinitely in Camp 020. But within less than a year, at the end of December 1944, Peereboom died in hospital due to complications of severe pneumonia caused by tuberculosis. His belongings, packed in his suitcase, were still lying uncollected in Camp 020 in November 1945 when the camp closed down.

While Stephens was habitually contemptuous about detainees in his reports, regardless of their background, Jewish detainees could do no right. The relevant reports are riddled with antisemitic sentiments. The way he described another Jewish man, Mirko Rot, was that he was 'a Balkan Jew, and it is inherent in him to buy himself out of trouble'.[79] What he was referring to were bribes that Rot, who was born in Budapest and was now in his early thirties, had had to give in order to get himself out of a German prison; money he had paid to be able to keep his business in Yugoslavia amid antisemitic laws imposed by the Hungarian occupiers; and the money he had to pay to obtain forged papers for him and his family to escape altogether. That in Camp 020 he tried to bribe a sentry in order to send a message to the King of Yugoslavia or the Chief Rabbi and protest his detention supported Milmo's hypothesis that 'we are dealing not with an honest Jewish refugee but with a man who is probably a shady crook'.[80] Anything Jewish people had to do to escape extermination made them dishonest and shifty; to be seen as 'honest', a Jew had to stay put in Nazi Europe. This would appear to be Camp 020's logic.

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The other way to look at Rot's story, with information that was available to Stephens and Milmo, was that he had recently lost his parents, his grandmother and an uncle in the Novi Sad raid of January 1942, in which over 3,000 civilians were massacred by the invading Hungarian forces. He tried to recover their bodies in order to bury them, but they had already been thrown in the Danube.[81] It is at that point that Rot was imprisoned at Sarajevo but bribed his way out. Then, in an attempt to maintain his business, he again used bribes in the hope that it would loosen control over his livelihood. After several attempts to escape Hitler's Europe, he made it to Lisbon on forged papers with his wife and three-year-old son. There, he made a voluntary statement that he had actually been recruited as an Abwehr agent but had no intention of carrying out his mission.[82] There were suspicions about whether he was telling the whole truth, not least because it emerged that he had received money from the Abwehr which he had not disclosed. At the same time, Rot was providing reliable intelligence to MI5, and it was believed that the reason he had gathered so much information on the Abwehr was because he had managed to 'pass as an Aryan'. This is what his interrogator in Camp 020, Major Stimson, thought and was 'prepared to believe, in view of his appearance, that this was possible'. Eventually, Stimson concluded that Rot 'genuinely bought his way out of occupied territory and that he had no intention of working for the Germans after his escape'.[83] He was released after about six weeks in Camp 020 and given a job with the exiled Yugoslav government.[84]

Antisemitism and prejudice were of course not confined to Camp 020. A British interrogating officer at Gibraltar wrote this of Emmanuel Wexler, a French Jew who was trying to get to Tangiers to fight for the Free French and ended up in Camp 020:

> He is a typical international Jew trader, ready to embark on any kind of enterprise if there is a chance of making money … He states that his journey to England was made … solely because of his patriotism and anti-German feelings. His is not the heroic type, and it must be considered that he left not only his possessions but also his parents in enemy territory … I find it somewhat hard to believe that there is not some more powerful motive which made him come here. The man is intelligent, cunning and very self-possessed.[85]

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Wexler had done nothing wrong but was still suspected of espionage because he shared a room with a man who was suspected of being a German agent. Both of them were sent to Camp 020. Many attempts were made to find some kind of evidence against Wexler but without success. Yet he was still detained. When Milmo reviewed the Camp 020 cases in the autumn of 1944, he wrote that the case against Wexler was 'quite the weakest of any of the special cases, and he has to some extent been the victim of circumstances. He went to Camp 020 on what I am sure we would now regard as insufficient evidence, and thereafter was lodged in Camp WX because he knew too much and where he learnt a great deal more [alluding to his knowledge of certain double agents who were in Camp 020, including Caroli]'.[86]

The case of four Polish men – three of whom were Jewish – arriving together from Portugal in spring 1941 was also not without incident. All four had questionable personal histories, and even though they all came on a visa to join the Polish Forces, one of them asked whether he could open a night club instead and the second one took up a civilian job with a furriers. The only one of the three not Jewish was Edward Ejsymont, who gave himself up as an agent of the Germans but claimed that he had no intention of serving them. His three companions claimed that Ejsymont was not telling the whole truth and that he had already sold a document trusted to him by the Polish Authorities to the Germans, containing the routes that Polish refugees were using to escape to Spain and Portugal.[87] Eventually, MI5 sided with Ejsymont: 'he is a wild and irresponsible young man who thought it a good joke to get money out of the Germans for his pleasures', wrote Milmo, '… [b]ut I do not believe that he betrayed – or intended betraying – either his own country or ours'.[88] He was initially released while the other three were detained until the war ended (one of them was detained simply to curtail his plans of becoming a 'night club king').[89]

It is difficult to think that being Jewish had nothing to do with perceptions of their reliability. In internal MI5 discussions about whether there was personal enmity behind the allegations against Ejsymont, it was noted that the latter 'is a Gentile and the other men are Jews'.[90] And so Ejsymont kept being seen in a favourable light, despite a recognition that he was unreliable. As in the case of Boyd, this was driven by a desire to use Ejsymont as a double agent. Despite efforts to that end, there was eventually resignation to the fact that '[w]e cannot turn such a dissolute youth loose with any degree of confidence'.[91] The attempts to use him

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for double agent work, under the suitable codename 'Careless', continued for some time, but he seemed completely unwilling to cooperate. Guy Liddell, in charge of MI5's counter-espionage section, described him in early 1943 as 'an incredibly indiscreet and a truculent fellow'.[92] Stuck alongside him in Camp 020, Abraham Jakob Sukiennik, one of the three men who arrived with Ejsymont, took to writing petitions protesting his detention, including to Władysław Sikorski, the Polish prime minister, and the UK Home Secretary, to whom he wrote that his detention was a case where:

> It is mockery to say that a Jew was trying to help, and was working for, the Nazis. In fact, I think that if the head of the German Secret Service in Lisbon had known that I was a Jew, he would most certainly have had me deported to Germany … It is not funny, or even amusing, to lay me open to hear 'dirty Jew' wherever I go [in the camp].[93]

Stephens wrote a curt response – 'no comment to offer excepting that there is no victimisation of Jews at this establishment' – while also asking whether 'strong representations please be made to the Home Office to put an end to this recurring nuisance [of prisoners writing petitions]?'[94]

2.5 LIMITS

Sorting people into categories is never an easy task, especially when the sorting is based on decisions made in the messiness of war. That not every individual who was taken to Camp 020 had an interrogation report in their name also complicates matters, in that it limits any conclusions about how big each category was or how its prominence changed across time. Out of the 450 or so prisoners, around 125 have a file in their name, which means their story has been reasonably well documented. Some of those 125 files contain information about other detainees, bringing the total about whom we know something to around half of all prisoners. Still, no one can *really* know what was in someone's mind, or where honesty ended and cover-ups began. After all, interrogation reports are not prisoners' biographies, nor were they noted down by MI5 in order to capture a person's dilemmas and sensitivities in their fullness. They were produced in order to make decisions about what to do with each person for the duration of the war.

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Some of those reports also betrayed the biases that existed within the camp. While Stephens has been called a 'product of his time', this is really putting it mildly. Xenophobia ran through the reports he wrote about each prisoner – du Chaffault, the French aristocrat who chose to work for the Nazis, epitomised 'the spirit of France which succumbed to the Hun. Faithless, shiftless, spineless';[95] Serafimides, the Greek sailor who tried to surrender an Allied ship to the Axis, acted like any other Greek because 'to swindle as a reinsurance against being swindled appears a prime objective of Greeks'; Hansen, who was taken out of a labour camp, made drunk so that a dentist could put secret ink into his teeth and then thrown over Scotland, was 'the Norwegian from the bowels of the earth'. More examples would not make the point any clearer. Stephens automatically viewed the few Jewish detainees with suspicion, and the antisemitism in his reports was consistent and clear. While these descriptions say a lot about Stephens, they also betray a broader ignorance about the dilemmas facing Jews in particular and, in some cases, the dilemmas facing civilians in occupied Europe more generally.

His tone aside, the gist of Stephens's assessments about the intelligence damage individuals had caused and the threat they continued to pose was in agreement with the more fact-based opinions of his other interrogators, and of Buster Milmo who was one step removed from the camp. His conclusions were also highly regarded. When Meiss-Teuffen tried to use his connections in London to get himself a more high-profile job than the Ministry of Labour could offer him, his requests reached Duff Cooper. But Cooper dismissed them, because Meiss-Teuffen 'has been interviewed by [Stephens who is] one of the most expert interrogators of queer characters and whose judgment I personally would put very high'.[96] And so Meiss-Teuffen, although released, was never given the kind of job he thought he deserved. Part of the accuracy of Stephens's assessments was down to microphones. While no one could know what really motivated a person to take on a mission, MI5 tried to circumvent that problem by bugging Camp 020. Microphones were something Stephens not only was reluctant to give any credit to, but he actually dismissed their utility. And it may be true that they were not helpful in furnishing factual information about codes, aliases or real names. But other instances, unrelated to Stephens's reports, show that microphones were indeed being used in order to help gauge detainees' politics and demeanour (such as the monitoring of Moe and Glad before turning them into double agents).

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That Camp 020 had processes in place to try to capture a prisoner's true colours and not only their explicit claims is also why its reports, despite their limitations, are still illuminating in explaining why people agreed to spy for Germany. The four explanations identified – victimhood, opportunism, ideology, choiceless choices – are not neat. People who were mentioned here as opportunists may have also been victims of circumstance in certain ways, and vice versa. Some victims of circumstance were antisemites and some may have preferred a Nazi Europe to a Soviet one. The categories, in short, are neither binary nor mutually exclusive. When in 1947 Stephens wrote an account of Camp 020, he too concluded that it was impossible to generalise about what type of person these people were. Although he too had a rough typology, he thought that 'the broader the survey' of people, 'the more certain it is that generalisation is without profit'.[97]

Similarly, there are individuals who are difficult to place in a category with any certainty based on what is known about them. Take the case of Dutch brothers Abraham and Jacobus Erasmus, who arrived in Ramsgate on a fishing boat in October 1942, on a mission to report on military and industrial matters using secret ink. Even though both described themselves as anti-Nazi, they said that their other brother was a Nazi and it is he who had suggested Abraham to the Germans for a mission. When Abraham was approached in his late twenties, he saw a mission as an opportunity to escape to Britain and duly accepted. Meanwhile, Jacobus was in a forced labour camp in Austria, where he saw 'everything that is called National Socialism', including Polish labourers being taken to a concentration camp as a punishment and being 'hardly recognisable on their return'.[98] When Jacobus returned home, Abraham told him about the mission and enlisted him to join. Why a forced labourer would agree to spy for Nazi Germany was one of the questions Camp 020 posed to Jacobus. He answered this by arguing that 'we agreed to do this, not as traitors or spies for the Germans, but as an act against the Germans … I was happy, in spite of the risk, that a chance had come into my hands of doing this for my Queen and country and for the Allied powers, for England and her allies'.[99] There were other questions, such as why Jacobus was allowed to leave the labour camp, or why they did not confess sooner; it was only after some pressure that the brothers admitted they were on a mission. These questions caused doubts about who they really wanted to work for. But Camp 020 was also not able 'to detect any signs

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of pro-German sympathies' in either man, a conclusion likely drawn through secretly listening to their conversations.[100] Nothing further is known about the case. How can the two be understood? Were they victims of circumstance? It would seem like it, not least because they were in the minority of detainees who were released from Camp 020 during the war. But could they not have been opportunists who changed their story only upon capture? This cannot be ruled out.

Two generalisations nevertheless seem possible. First, ideology in and of itself appears to have been a motivation for only a few. Not only was it not a factor most of the time, what also emerges from the interrogation reports is that their politics did not fall neatly into either the Nazi or anti-Nazi categories. Even when someone was not a Nazi, they were not necessarily anti-Nazi. Those who were anti-Nazi were not automatically pro-Allied. Some prisoners were anti-British, regardless of their attitudes towards Nazi Germany. This was a reality that MI5 accepted, though in some cases they proved too strict in ascribing someone the Nazi label if it jarred with other characteristics (such as Boyd, who was British). The second generalisation is that most of Camp 020's detainees were not professionals. The spy fever pushed MI5 to brace for skilled spies, but what they found were amateurs sent on hopeless missions, trying to appear canny against British intelligence and psychological pressure. These were, in other words, ordinary Europeans in extraordinary circumstances. This is not to say that they were not dangerous and Camp 020 was unjustified. A victim of circumstance could still cause damage if they had decided to execute their mission. But the observation that MI5's Klop Ustinov made in 1942 – that the Abwehr would not be sending trained spies but 'people under fear and obligation' – held for the rest of the war.

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